

**Abstract 417**

**TITLE:** Effects of CBSM+ on Safer Sex Behaviors Among Women Living With AIDS: The SMART/EST Women's Project

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**BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVE:** Behavioral interventions have been found to be efficacious in reducing sexual risk behavior. We examined the effects of a cognitive behavioral relaxation training approach to stress management, incorporating expressive/supportive therapy (CBSM+), on the acceptability of a variety of sexual barriers among women living with HIV. We hypothesized CBSM+ would increase sexual barrier use and acceptability.

**METHODS:** Women living with HIV were recruited from 3 cities (Miami, New York, Newark). Data (n = 345) was drawn from the SMART/EST Women's Project, a CBSM+ intervention. Participants were randomly assigned to a "high intensity" 10-week CBSM+ group intervention (n = 160) or "low intensity" psychoeducational individual condition (n = 185). Participants had a mean age of 38, and most were African American (66%). The majority of women had a history of alcohol (58%) or drug dependence (65%). Preliminary data was analyzed (n = 18) using an adapted version of the Center for AIDS Prevention Study's Barrier Questionnaire administered at baseline and 10 weeks.

**RESULTS:** At baseline, 72% of the entire sample reported current barrier use. Reported barrier use among participants in both intervention conditions increased (pre-group intervention = 71% to 100% vs. pre-individual intervention = 73% to 100%). Reported use of female condoms increased among all participants (group = 0% to 100% vs. individual = 68% to 86%). Reported use of microbicidal barriers showed no change in either condition (group = 43% to 47% vs. individual = 33% to 28%). The perceived acceptability of using barriers to prevent HIV or STD transmission increased in the group condition (t = 72.61, p <.05). Additional data concerning acceptability of a variety of barrier products will be presented.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Exposure to a cognitive behavioral intervention designed to enhance active coping, self-efficacy and social support may increase safer sexual practices. Future research will assess the acceptability of a barrier-focused intervention combined with CBSM+ to reduce HIV and STD transmission.

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